Settlement of accounts by the Food Department.

134. MR MAJEED MARIKAR *(Kunnathnad I—Muslim)*: Will the Honourable Minister for Food be pleased to state:

(*a*) whether the Government is aware that there is inordinate delay in settlement of accounts by the Food Department with merchants and contractors on account of excess remittances made in favour of and bills drawn against that Department; whether any complaint has been received of such delay; and if there has been any delay what are the reasons for the same; and

(*b*) whether the Government will make enquiries regarding such delays for payments and see that the settlement of accounts are not delayed beyond three months at the most after receipts of bills and claims?

HON'BLE MR. K. M. KORAH: (*a*) No. avoidable delay is caused by the Food Department in the matter of settlement of accounts of the merchants and contractors. The refund of excess remittances and settlement of bills require verification not only by the Food Department but also by the Audit Department. In most of the cases Government sanction is also required.

(*b*) Specific instances of delay which are brought to the notice of Government will be duly enquired into. Settlement of accounts will be arranged to be made as early as practicable.

Pests affecting cardamom cultivation.

135. MR. MAJEED MARIKAR: Will the Honourable Minister for Agriculture be pleased to state:

(*a*) whether he is aware of the prevalence of any diseases or pests affecting cardamom cultivation in the State and if so will he be pleased to mention the different kind of such diseases and pests affecting the said cultivation; and

(*b*) whether the Department of Agriculture has taken on hand the question of prevention and cure of the said diseases and pests?

HON'BLE MR. K. M. KORAH: (*a*) Yes. Chiefly "Thrips" which cause berry disease and "Hairy Caterpillar" eating the leaves of the cardamom plant.

(*b*) Yes. The Department has published certain leaflets on the methods to be adopted for the prevention and control of the pests (placed below).

Supply of chemical manure.

136. MR. K. R. ELANKATH: Will the Honourable Minister for Agriculture be pleased to state:

(*a*) whether Government are aware that chemical manure supplied through Government depots and co-operative societies or other organisations in the State are sold to bonafide agriculturists at blackmarket rates; and

(*b*) if so, what steps do they propose to take to put a stop to this practice?

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